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3 JANUARY 1997 | ISSUE 390

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VOLVOS

1995 M VOLVO B10M MKIV PLAXTON PREMIERE 350, 50 reclining seats, Telma, ABS, continental door, double glazed, Auto Lube, carpet, curtains, radio PA, Webasto etc. Choice of 3 2, low mileage..... **£120,000**

1995 M VOLVO B10M MKIV PLAXTON PREMIERE 350, 49 reclining seats, shades, toilet, Telma, ABS, continental door, double glazed, Webasto, Auto Lube, carpet, curtains, radio/PA etc..... **£125,000**

1994 L VOLVO B10M MARK IV PLAXTON PREMIERE 320, 49/53 reclining seats, courier centre demountable toilet, d/glazed, blinds, fridge, boiler, Telma, radio, TV..... **£100,000**

1992 J VOLVO MARK III PLAXTON EXCALIBUR 350, 49/53 reclining seats, courier seat, centre demountable toilet, continental door, air conditioning, boiler, fridge, d/glazed, radio/PA, TV..... **Choice of 3 £95,000**

1988 VOLVO B10M GLE JONCKHEERE 599, 49 retrimmed reclining seats, courier seat, rear sunken toilet, continental door, Splitter, Telma, d/glazed, radio/PA, boiler, exceptional condition..... **Choice of 2 £65,000**

1988 E VOLVO B10M PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3500, 53 retrimmed Graffiti reclining seats, courier, Telma, double glazing, POD, radio/PA..... **£59,500**

1988 VOLVO B10M PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3200, 59 seater, radio/PA, pannier lockers..... **£57,000**

1988 VOLVO B10M PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3200, 57 seats, radio/PA, pannier lockers..... **£57,000**

1988 F VOLVO B10M IKARUS BLUE DANUBE, 49/53 seats, centre demountable toilet, courier d/glazed, continental door..... **£47,500**

1986 PP VOLVO B10M VAN HOOL ALIZEE H, 53 reclining retrimmed seats, courier d/glazed, blinds, exceptional..... **£55,000**

1985 VOLVO B10M PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3500, 49/53 reclining retrimmed seats, courier centre demountable toilet, Webasto, alloys, radio/PA..... **£45,000**

1984 VOLVO B10M PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3500, 53 reclining seats, courier seat, d/glazed, radio/PA, retrimmed, new stretch panels, repainted..... **£37,500**

1983 VOLVO B10M PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3500, 51 reclining seats, courier, double glazing, Webasto, radio + PA, new test, belts fitted..... **£29,500**

1979 V VOLVO B58 DUPEL DOMINANT II EXPRESS, 53 seats, 11mtr, radio/PA..... **£8,500**

1977 VOLVO B58 PLAXTON VIEWMASTER, 53 seater, radio, PA..... **£8,500**

OTHERS

1994 DENNIS JAVELIN CAETANO ALGARVE II, 53 reclining seats, courier, low driver, d/glazed, full height, continental door, radio/PA..... **£92,500**

1993 SCANIA K113 PLAXTON PREMIERE 350, 49/53 reclining seats, courier, auto transmission, ZF HP 600, centre demountable toilet, boiler/fridge, double glazing, ABS, Sutrak air conditioning, radio/PA etc, immaculate..... **£120,000**

1991 SCANIA K93 BERKHOF 320, 49 Vogel seats, courier, floor mounted Shades toilet, double glazing, radio/PA..... **£69,000**

1991 PP ASQUITH, 11 seats, PSV, leather buttoned seats, full carpet, stainless steel grille battery box, in mint condition, mileage only 28,000 miles..... **£21,000**

1990 SCANIA K113 BERKHOF 2000 HL, 49 Vogel reclining seats, courier, centre sunken toilet/continental door, splitter, Telma, fridge, boiler, bunk, radio/PA etc..... **£84,000**

1990 MAN CAETANO ALGARVE, 35 reclining seats, courier seat, continental door, radio/PA..... **£55,000**

1990 G DENNIS JAVELIN DUPEL 320, 53 reclining seats, rear sunken toilet/continental door, radio/PA/curtains, belts..... **£49,500**

1988 MERCEDES 609 REEVE BURGESS, 23 seater, boot, radio, re-paint white..... **£12,500**

1987 BEDFORD YNV PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3200, 54 seats, rear floor mounted toilet, radio/PA, power door..... **£22,500**

1985 PP DAF MB200 PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3500, 49 retrimmed reclining seats, courier, rear sunken toilet, continental door, boiler, radio/PA, provision for TV..... **£32,500**

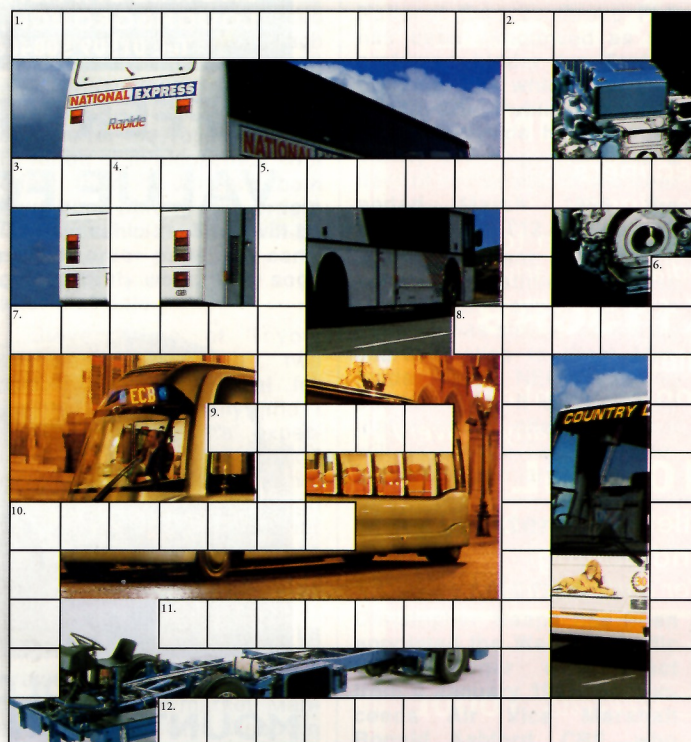
1984 PP LEYLAND TIGER 245 VAN HOOL ALIZEE H, 51 reclining seats, courier seat, Toilet, Telma, TV..... **£34,000**

1983 FORD R1115 PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3200, 53 seater, radio/PA, PO..... **£12,000**

1983 MERCEDES 608 REEVE BURGESS MINIBUS, 21 seater..... **£4,500**

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1. Someone to talk to when buying (5,8)	2. Only with Volvo, is it so extensive (6,2,7)
3. Available funding choices (7,7)	4. It's good at all four points of the compass (4)
7. & 9. Of great importance, particularly when you come to trade in (6,5)	5. Dealer Support? This well spread takes time! (8)
8. Market leading coach chassis (5)	6. Long term pledge (10)
10. (across & down) & 11 Plaxton, Van Hool, Jonckheere, Berkhof and Salvador Caetano are all these (4,7,8)	10. See 10 across
12. Always there (11)	

If you are not a crossword enthusiast, you can get the complete picture from Volvo's 1997 coach season information pack.

As well as detailing chassis and body options, it also tells you what contract service options are available to Volvo coach operators.

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VOLVO

News

EYMS to buy Armstrong Galley.

East Yorkshire Travel, the coaching arm of the EYMS Group, is to buy Armstrong Galley, the coach subsidiary of Stagecoach Busways, in a deal scheduled for completion on 4 January. Almost all of the staff currently employed by Armstrong Galley will be taken on by East Yorkshire Travel together with 16 vehicles. Armstrong Galley's National Express contracts and the vehicles used on them are to be retained by Busways.

In 1996 EYT established Tyneside Coach Travel when it acquired the four coach business of Hollings Coaches of North Shields. Armstrong Galley will be integrated within Tyneside Coach Travel over the coming months and will help to develop its coach holiday business, although private hire will continue to be important. Some vehicles will be transferred to North Shields, and others will remain at Busway's Byker depot for up to three months, during which time Armstrong Galley's administrative staff will continue to be based at the Busways travel office in Newcastle city centre. EYT's North Shields depot will be developed and eventually all coaches and office staff will transfer there.

A manager for the Armstrong Galley/Tyneside unit will be appointed soon and will report to EYT managing director, Graham Rogers.

Middleton joins AVE Berkhof.

AVE Berkhof have announced the appointment of Alan Middleton as sales executive. He is to cover the Midlands, North of England and Scotland. Alan lives in the East Midlands and was previously with DSB Sales and Yeates.

David Waterman, sales and marketing director for AVE Berkhof commented, 'I am pleased to welcome Alan to our team. Our sales have been growing year by year and now is the right time to make an appointment of this nature in order to increase our customer base in the North of the country. I am sure Alan will help us achieve this.'

Alan can be contacted at home on 01509 852624, via his mobile on 0370 735228 or through AVE Berkhof on 01344 861787.

New Toyota Optimo dealerships announced.

Toyota GB have announced the appointment of AD Coach Sales of Witheridge, Devon and Regal Coach Sales of Kirkintilloch near Glasgow as dealers for the Toyota Optimo IV range of minicoaches. With effect from 1 January both have been able to take orders for new vehicles. They will be able to order parts and carry out warranty work, 'very soon after that date.'

Steve Prime of Toyota commented, 'These two appointments are ideal for Toyota geographically and I am sure the dealers' expertise in this specialist market will lead to increased penetration.' He added, 'Although we have been talking to other prospective dealers we are still seeking someone based in the South East.'

AD Coach Sales is in its tenth year of trading and has previously concentrated on the used vehicle market. Managing director Glyn Goodwin commented, 'The confirmation of our appointment by Toyota is a significant step for us. It justifies all the hard work put into developing the company and we intend the relationship to be a successful one. The Toyota Optimo is a an attractive and versatile vehicle. It is sensibly priced and suitable for many different types of work. We are able to offer the Optimo with a Triple Choice purchase option from Lombard Business Finance along with various other finance and leasing packages.'

The telephone numbers of the new dealerships are: AD Coach Sales - 01884 860767 and Regal Coach Sales - 0141 776 3268.

Registration consultation.

Sir George Young, Secretary of State for Transport, has announced a consultation on possible changes to the current system of registering vehicles. A consultation document discusses a number of possible alternatives to the current scheme which is scheduled to end in 2004 although some of the proposals would involve replacing it before then. Comments should be made to the Department of Transport no later than 21 March 1997.

National Express preferred bidder for Taybus.

National Express Group PLC has been announced as the preferred bidder for Taybus Holdings Ltd. which operates as Tayside Public Transport Co Ltd. Tayside has approximately 500 employees and a fleet of 150 buses. In the year ended March 1996 the turnover was £12.3 million.

A statement issued on behalf of National Express Group said, 'Taybus, although smaller, has similar operating characteristics to West Midlands Travel, NEG's existing bus business.' It is anticipated that a formal offer document will be sent to Taybus shareholders in January 1997.

New Western Traffic Commissioner.

Christopher Heaps has been appointed the Western Traffic Commissioner with effect from 6 January 1997. He succeeds Air Vice Marshall Ronald Ashford, CBE, who retired in May 1996. In the interim the Western traffic area had been covered by John Mervyn Pugh, Traffic Commissioner for the West Midlands and South Wales traffic areas.

Christopher Heaps is 54 and married with two daughters. He is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Transport, has written on modern transport issues and was formerly an equity partner in the city law firm of Eversheds.

Go-Ahead rejoin CPT.

Go-Ahead Group has officially rejoined the Confederation of Passenger Transport UK. The group represents just over 6% of the bus market and this means that over 98% of the bus industry is within CPT membership. Newly appointed CPT president, Moir Lockhead, said: 'This is good news for the CPT and great news for the industry. It brings together virtually the entire bus industry under one umbrella, which will render our dealings with opinion formers and legislators even more effective. We welcome Go-Ahead Group with open arms and look forward to working with them on the crucial issues affecting the industry.'



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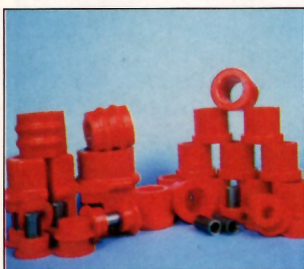
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News

Shearings management complete £100m buyout.

A management team led by chief executive, John Slatcher, has bought out the holiday tour operator Shearings from Rank Group plc in a deal involving total funding of £100 million. NatWest Ventures are investing £30 million for a majority equity stake and all permanent employees are to be given the opportunity to invest in the company.

Shearings has 319 coaches and 34 wholly owned hotels. It sells over 500,000 holidays a year, predominantly to the over 50 age group. Sixty per cent of Shearings' customers stay in a Shearings hotel and repeat custom is 63 per cent. Operating profits for 1996 are expected to be in the region of £8.5 million.

John Slatcher commented, 'We are pleased to be able to focus on what we do best - running the business. NatWest Ventures understand our market and are prepared to invest alongside us to build this business into a world-wide, first class holiday operation, primarily with the 50+ consumer. We are optimistic about our prospects.'

Mark Wordworth, director of NatWest Ventures said, 'This is a good deal for both NatWest Ventures and Shearings. We have acquired a high quality business, with good growth prospects and a first class management team who are committed to delivering an excellent product to their customers.'

The management team were advised by Deloitte and Touche Corporate Finance who arranged the funding package.

No buyer found for Devon Conversions

The joint administrative receivers of Devon Conversions (CP) Ltd, Trevor Frid and Cedric Clapp of Ernst & Young, have been unsuccessful in their efforts to find a buyer for the troubled Exeter based convertors and an auction sale of the remaining assets will now be held.

In a statement issued on 20 December they said, 'It has regrettably not been possible to find a purchaser for the business assets as a going concern. Initially the workforce of 84 employees (including two directors) were retained whilst negotiations proceeded with interested parties. On 12 December 1996, it was necessary to declare 38 redundancies in order to provide a further interval in which to develop interest shown.'

'During the past week interest has continued with four parties attending the company's premises. Unfortunately no offer has been forthcoming and a point has now been reached where today, 20 December 1996, it is necessary to declare a further 39 redundancies including two directors. The joint administrative receivers sympathise with the employees made redundant today, particularly bearing in mind the proximity to the Christmas and New Year holiday. In an attempt to reduce hardship, every effort has been made to ensure that today, employees upon being made redundant will be paid their salaries outstanding up to the date of leaving.'

MTL win Merseyrail Electrics franchise.

MTL Trust Holdings Ltd has been awarded the Merseyrail Electrics Ltd passenger rail franchise by the franchising director in partnership with Merseyside Passenger Transport Executive. Merseyrail Electrics operates the 75 mile Wirral and Northern Line network of services to and from Liverpool.

The franchise has been awarded for a period of approximately seven years and two months. Under it MTL has agreed to comply fully with the passenger service requirement set by the PTE for the October 1997 timetable. It has committed to the PTE's passenger charter and accepted a performance incentive regime based on punctuality and reliability targets. MTL is also to invest approximately £6.8 million on enhanced security throughout the network including the installation of CCTV at all stations within three years, the creation of a fast response security force, enhanced station lighting and concealed on-train CCTV surveillance trials during 1997.

MTL will receive support of £80.7 million in the first year declining to £60.8 million in 2003/4, which represents an average of £67.6 million per annum over the life of the franchise. The provisional claim from British Rail for the year 1996/7, stated on a comparable basis is £84.13 million including an administered profit of £2.67 million. Merseyrail will retain the revenue risk.

National Express bans unaccompanied children.

National Express has announced that it is no longer willing to carry unaccompanied children under the age of 16, although it has launched a special parent and child travel concession to limit any financial hardship caused to the small percentage of customers who previously travelled in this way.

The decision followed a review of the company's procedures after an eight year old boy travelling from London to Northampton was mistakenly dropped off in Milton Keynes. He later completed his journey safely and was reunited with his family.

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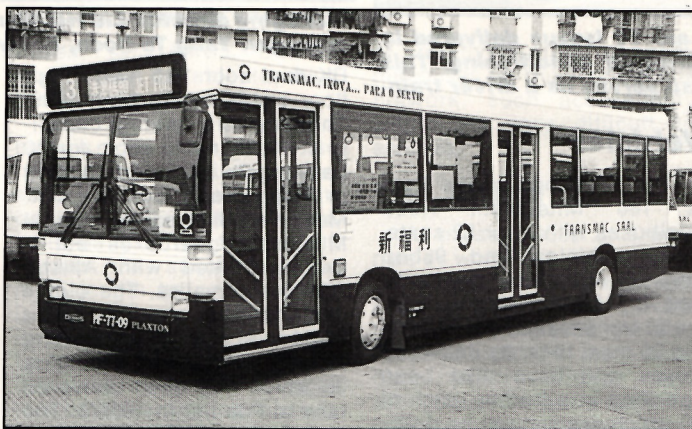
Operator Focus

Transmac - Transportes Urbanos de Macau S.A.R.L.

On the south eastern coast of China, across the Pearl River delta from Hong Kong is the small Portuguese colony of Macau. Heavily reliant on the tourism industry for its income, the territory occupies less than seven square miles of land area and though it has its share of high rise blocks it retains many traditional buildings and a much more relaxed atmosphere than Hong Kong.

There are two major franchised operators, the biggest of which is Transmac - Transportes Urbanos de Macau, S.A.R.L. - universally known simply as Transmac. Franchises are issued for 10 years and Transmac's current authority takes it to September 1998. Each party has to give six months prior notice if it does not wish to renew the arrangement and, given the investment in new vehicles and premises, the company intends to be deeply involved in the operation of buses in Macau for many years to come. Under the franchising system the Government sets the fare levels and also controls the routes.

The well kept fleet is painted in various combinations of yellow, white and blue and consists of almost 250 air con-



The ten Dennis Dart Plaxton Pointers are allocated to Transmac's route 3 which links the Jetfoil terminal with Portas Do Cerco.

ditioned vehicles, the average age of which is only five and a half years. My visit, on a Sunday, coincided with the annual Macau Grand Prix race meeting for which roads are closed to create the circuit. Despite this I was able to reach Transmac's headquarters at Estrada Marginal Ilha Verde and speak to managing director Liu Hei Wan, known as Alfred and manager Yang Ta-Doon known as Francis.

The head office is located at the oldest of the company's two depots, a new one at Pac On having opened two months

prior to my visit. At present more vehicles are allocated to Ilha Verde than Pac On but as operations are built up the split will become 50/50 and any expansion of Transmac's activities will be from Pac On.

Transmac was formed in June 1988 when a group of Chinese businessmen based in Macau took over the assets of Fok Lei Bus Autocarros which had been running buses since 1952. Fok Lei had an aging fleet which had in its time included a wide variety

of British double and single deckers including second-hand Bristol K, L, LS and Lodekka models, Leyland Titan PD3s, Daimler CVG and CCGs and a batch of Albion Vikings purchased new. All of its assets were acquired by Transmac which immediately set about investing in new buses.

Today's fleet consists of 200 minibuses and 50 larger buses of between 10 and 10.5 metres in length. There are 550 staff of whom 350 are drivers, 60 are mechanics, 50 are involved in administration and 30 are monitors or inspectors. The rest include cleaners, bus wash staff and storemen and there are even two tailors who are kept busy repairing seats damaged by vandalism.

Transmac's annual turnover is 110 million Macau patacas/dollars, each being worth roughly three per cent less than the Hong Kong dollar though the latter currency is readily accepted in Macau. This equates to around £10 million. Most of this is collected as cash although the introduction of a monthly ticket in 1991 has been very successful and now accounts for



A batch of five Toyota Coasters was purchased in 1994. They have four speed automatic gearboxes and seat 22.



One of Transmac's first Mitsubishi Rosas delivered in 1988 with a 3,300cc engine and manual gearbox.

Operator Focus



The oldest large buses owned are 10 Isuzus delivered in 1982/3 which were retrofitted with air conditioning. This vehicle with Wong Ming body also serves as a driver training vehicle.

between 15% and 20% of revenue.

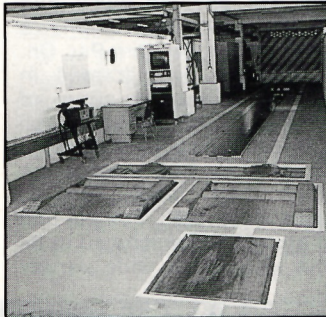
Questions about the passenger profile were largely wasted because since the introduction of air conditioning virtually everyone uses the bus. Originally the custom came almost entirely from workers but now office staff and management, whether male or female, old or young, are happy to travel by bus. Alfred is pleased that the buses are attracting a lot of marginal customers. It may be significant that smoking is not allowed on the buses, although many carry advertising for different cigarette brands.

A one month trial with a stored value card (SVC) developed by an American supplier and an Australian system integrator was nearing completion. Alfred confirmed that if there were no hiccups with it the system would be introduced on all of the company's routes. The validators, which automatically deduct the requisite fare from the card, can be set to operate with varying degrees of sensitivity. Transmac have theirs set to operate only when the card is within two inches of the device.

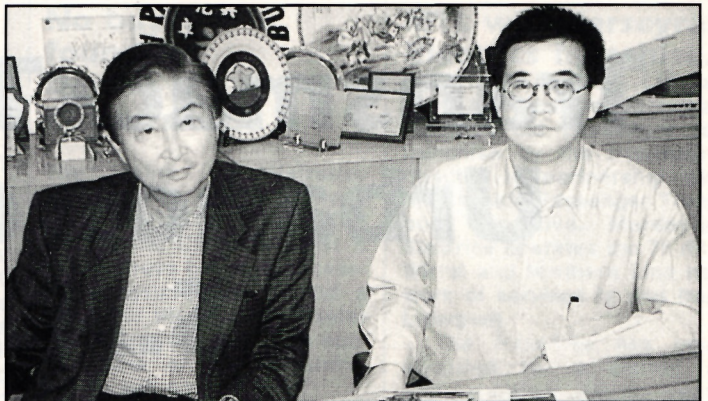
Vehicles

The backbone of the fleet is 186 Mitsubishi Rosa minibuses with 21 or 22 seats. Early vehicles had 96bhp engines while later deliveries had a 115bhp output. Automatic transmissions feature in the 25 most recently delivered Rosas and have also been specified in a further batch of 30 which are soon to be delivered. Completing the minibus line-up are six 1988 23 seat Nissan Civilians and five 22 seat Toyota Coasters with Japanese Arakawa coachwork delivered in 1994.

Big buses consist of 30 front engined Mitsubishi Fuso



Transmac has modern maintenance facilities. All vehicles are checked on this rolling road at each service.



Managing director, Liu Hei Wan, known as Alfred (right) and manager, Yang Ta-Doon, known as Francis.

BK dual door 10.5 metre high floor buses dating from 1989. These have a seating capacity of 43, standing room for 30 passengers and were bodied in Hong Kong by Jit Luen. Most have five speed manual Mitsubishi gearboxes but a few are fitted with Allison AT545 automatics. The oldest large buses are 10 Isuzu 6BD1 with two styles of Hong Kong built bodywork seating 38 which had been delivered new to Fok Lei in 1982/3. The Isuzus are scheduled for early replacement and thought is already being given to what will follow the Fusos.

Saving the best until last, the most passenger friendly buses in Macau are ten Dennis Darts with Scarborough built dual door Plaxton Pointer bodies delivered in 1995. The single step entrances compare very favourably with all other vehicles on the island and the 32 seat, 28 standee layout gives a passenger capacity of 60 or so which is frequently required. Darts for the East Asian market have 145bhp rather than 130bhp versions of the Cummins B series engine to generate the extra power to directly drive their Suttrak air conditioning systems. Transmac's other large buses rely on auxiliary engines to provide the all-important refriger-

ated air which has been a feature of the entire fleet since 1991 and a legal requirement since 1994. The dual door layout was specified to cater for heavy passenger flow and to save stoppage times during the rush hour.

The Pointer Darts are all allocated to the high profile route 3 which links the Jetfoil terminus with Portas de Cerco using the main roads through the centre of Macau. The driving team is specially selected. When Macau's international airport opened in December 1995 one of the Darts was initially allocated to the service which is jointly operated with the other franchised bus operator, TCM. Traffic is building up less slowly than at first envisaged and both operators now use minibuses on the airport route. Alfred said that competition was as friendly as that between any two competitors.

Alfred has subscribed to Bus & Coach Buyer for some years and is familiar with European products and their build quality. Prior to buying the Darts he had been deterred from buying because of price and fears about support and spare parts availability. With the appreciation of the yen and devaluing of the pound it made the UK more attractive and as a result he



Minibuses awaiting their next duty in the yard at the Estrada Marginal Ilha Verde depot.

Operator Focus



The front entrance step arrangement on an Isuzu bus.

looked beyond Japan. Hong Kong operators were also turning to the Dart although at the time Transmac placed its order there were no Plaxton Pointers operating there.

After almost a year's operational experience, Alfred is pleased with the quality of build and the level of service and support he receives from Plaxton. Perhaps surprisingly they have only been bought for a ten year life. 'There is no point paying to buy something to last 15-20 years,' he said, 'It's not worth it because technology changes.'

All maintenance and repair work is done by the company in its own workshops. Francis showed me the rolling road facility at Ilha Verde and told me that all buses are checked on this to an exacting standard at each service. The Darts do mark something of a departure for Transmac as the bodies are constructed in aluminium rather than the galvanised steel of its Japanese vehicles. Alfred admits that if one received serious body damage, 'it would be a major exercise for the workforce to learn to fix the first one.'

Narrow streets

It is not Macau's laws which limit the size of buses and coaches - vehicles 12 metres long, 2.5 metres wide and with a maximum GVW of 18 tonnes are perfectly legal - it is the roads which dictate the maximum dimensions. It is not only many of Macau's buildings which exhibit a southern European influence, this can also be seen in the way people park wherever they want, reducing the width of the already narrow streets. 'We could buy 12 metre



Alongside one of the Isuzu buses, the Dart shows that even in standard format it has distinct accessibility advantages over its Japanese competitors.

buses,' said Alfred, 'But we would only be able to drive them in straight lines.'

The problem is such a serious one that Transmac now has to run minibuses on some routes formerly operated with large buses. Alfred believes that for future purchases the absolute maximum length he can consider is 10.3 metres and the majority of acquisitions will continue to be 8.0 metres. He sees this as something of a problem because running minis is expensive as drivers are paid the same. Minis only have one door as a result of which journey times are longer and people on board are somewhat crushed together.

Not only are the roads narrow and often difficult to negotiate, their condition is described by Alfred as, 'improving, but not yet up to European standards.' A particular problem is that kerb heights are not standardised. It is not unusual for a bus to have to mount the kerb to get round a corner if cars are illegally parked.

Unlike Britain and even nearby Hong Kong there is no clamour in Macau from the disabled lobby for vehicles to be wheelchair accessible, indeed given the enforced use

of relatively low capacity minibuses for much of the bus network, such accessibility would be very difficult to achieve.

The future

At present 95% of Transmac's workload consists of franchised bus services with the other five per cent private hire. Alfred believes there is scope to expand in the private hire, factory shuttle and school bus markets and thinks this could be achieved using vehicles already owned. The company maintains its vehicles to a high standard and when they are no longer sufficiently economic to operate all day on the demanding bus network they would still be capable of performing lighter duties. Finding further buyers



Soon after Transmac took over the business of Fok Lei a batch of 30 Mitsubishi Fuso chassis with bodywork built in Hong Kong were purchased.



Most of the Mitsubishi Rosa fleet seats 22 passengers though there are variations.



The interior of one of Transmac's ten dual door Plaxton Pointer Dennis Darts.

other than the scrapman is difficult because of their right hand drive layout and the cost of shipping them from Macau to the few potential markets, so finding additional but less arduous work in Macau seems a sensible use of resources. Alfred would also be interested to hear from anyone who knows of a good market for right hand drive Isuzus, Mitsubishi's and Nissans with air conditioning.

Just as Hong Kong is to be returned by Britain to China on 1 July 1997, Portugal will hand back Macau in December 1999. Though the structure may change a bit and the Governor will change, Alfred does not think that this will lead to any day to day differences for the citizens of Macau. 'There may even be a benefit in more visitors from China,' he commented.

Clearly Transmac's directors already have strong links with China as in 1994 some of them jointly set up the Guangzhou Xin Fu Li Bus Service Company in association with the Guangzhou public transport organisation. This uses vehicles bought new and painted pink and white. Unlike buses in Hong Kong and Macau they have the steering wheel on the left rather than the right. They also carry the Transmac arrow-wheel roundel.

English readers interested in knowing more about the Transmac may find the Macau Bus Handbook published by Northcord Transport of Hong Kong, price HK\$100.00, a useful publication. The copy Alfred gave me proved helpful in compiling this article.

By Stuart Jones.

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Alizee 'SH', 53R/Toilet
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Hool 'SH', 49/Toilet
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Hool Alizee 'DH', 53R
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Plaxton 3500, 53R
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1989 SB3000 PLAXTON
3500, 51/Toilet

1988 VOLVO B10M,
Plaxton 3500, 49R/Toilet

1988 PP BOVA FUTURA
FHD, 49R/Toilet

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1988 F SB3000 Van Hool
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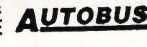
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Alternative Fuels

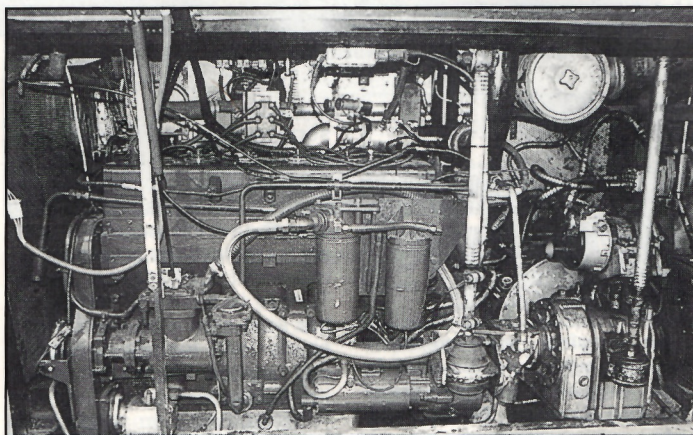
London Pride taking the green route

London Pride's extensive and popular open-top tours of London are to be at the forefront of anti-pollution measures in the city. Following a significant period of development a vehicle powered by a liquid petroleum gas fuelled Vineyard engine will enter service shortly. Others are scheduled to follow.

The Vineyard BT10 engine is based on the Cummins L10 but is significantly altered. The cylinder head is completely re-worked, different valves are used, the compression ratio is dropped to around 10.5:1, the con-rods are changed and new pistons are added. Even the piston rings bear little resemblance to the originals as they have completely altered sectional profiles and land areas. The turbocharger is also replaced.

Brian Longley, engineering director of Ensignbus, London Pride's parent company, said, 'We have been looking at LPG conversions for three years now. We run a high profile operation in central London which is always in the public eye and we believe this to be a positive statement towards protecting the environment. It has been three years of hard slog arriving at this point, but we are satisfied that we have found the ideal solution.'

'Initially we tried modifying a Gardner engine in one of the MCW Metrobus double deckers but we encountered more problems than we anticipated. The engineering basics sound very simple. You need to fit an ignition system, spark plugs and lower the compression ratio, but in real life things just aren't that straight forward. We haven't abandoned the development of Gardners but we turned our attention to the turbocharged Cummins L10 in the Metroliners. This presented new challenges because with this type of unit a lot of very sophisticated things have to happen to obtain the right perfor-



Vineyard's BT10 engine installation.

mance characteristics.'

'We got in touch with Power Torque Engineering of Coventry around 12 months ago and they introduced us to the Vineyard engine. What was attractive to us about this unit was that it could be designed from the ground up to achieve exactly what we wanted. We were particularly impressed by special metering and computerised monitoring of performance to make sure everything matches - from the type of components used to the type of operation the vehicle is on or even down to a particular route. This is a real quantum leap in technology.'

Andrew Varney, deputy managing director of Power Torque, explained, 'The heart of the success lies with the management system's ability to monitor and adjust the mass air flow and mass fuel flow. By continuously comparing the temperature of what goes into the engine and what comes out of the exhaust manifold, the management system can adjust the mixture to optimise performance. This can also be governed by pre-programming the unit to ensure the engine remains between certain parameters. It is not difficult to alter the performance characteristics - we can do it on the move, just

by plugging in a lap-top computer. Ideally we can record exactly how long the engine is running every day, how long it spends at idle and at low rpm. The system can then be mapped to deliver the best possible combustion in line with the vehicle's operational duties. That means optimising the engine to match a specific environment or even down to specific routes.'

One problem faced by London Pride was that its Metroliners were designed as motorway or long-haul vehicles and the engines and gearboxes were intended to deliver their best performance at higher speeds. Being placed in a continuous low speed environment, in the thick of London traffic, could not be described as an ideal match, but Brian insisted that the Metroliner was particularly favoured because it had the right sort of internal layout. He said, 'What we want, ideally, is a vehicle that has a lot more seats upstairs than down. Sightseeing passengers are really only interested in being upstairs. Metroliners lend themselves to our conversions very well, although most of the ones we get now have centre doors and staircases. We have to convert them to front entrance and move the staircase immediately behind the driver.'

During testing and evaluation of the Vineyard powered Metroliner, drivers have expressed a preference for the LPG fuelled unit. They have been impressed with the performance, particularly the clean acceleration, and the lack of noise and vibration. Back at the Ensignbus depot in Rainham, a small LPG fuelling point has been installed. Brian pointed out that this had been sufficient for the testing purposes but a new refuelling system was being installed on land recently acquired by Ensign.



LPG refuelling facilities have been installed at London Pride's premises.

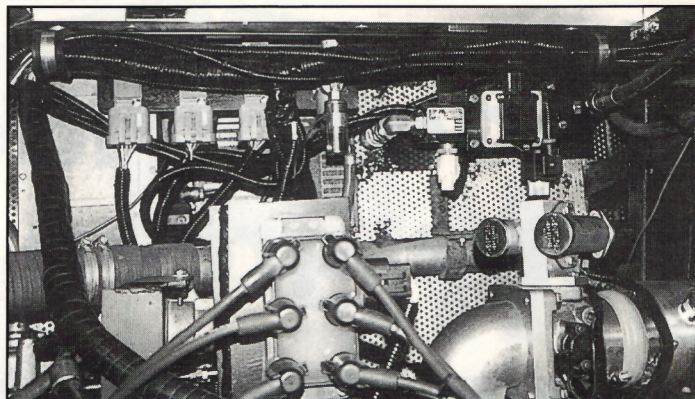
Alternative Fuels

This is to include four large tanks to be positioned directly behind the existing diesel refuelling points and will centralise all refuelling in one area.

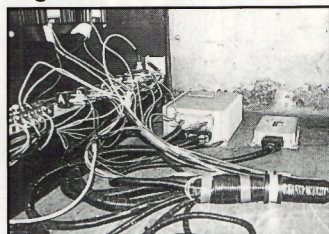
Based on the success of the Vineyard unit in trials, London Pride has ordered a further ten units and has taken an option on 15 more for installation before the end of 1997. All London Pride's tour routes will feature vehicles running on LPG and the 25 units would incorporate the whole of the Metroliner fleet. Brian insists that the company will continue to evaluate Gardner engines and LPG conversions because the remaining vehicles are all Metrobuses or Dennis Dominators, with the exception of a couple of Leyland Titans.

Summing up his feelings on the conversion, Brian said, 'I have to say I'm very impressed and totally satisfied that we have made the right choice. We needed to do something positive and although we knew it would cost more money we felt we needed to make a statement. Thanks to the recent cut in gas fuel taxation the vehicles won't actually cost any more to run. They only take a few minutes more to fill, the additional weight isn't a problem to us and the on-board fuel tanks hold enough for 22 hours continuous operation. Overall it suits us very well.'

The Vineyard BT10 clearly indicates its Cummins heritage in external appearance, but was obviously quieter and smoother running than a high compression diesel. Despite this, there was no lack of performance and the engine picked up very quickly and



LPG engines have spark ignition systems similar to petrol engines.



The engine management system which is located in the luggage compartment on the London Pride vehicle.

cleanly when pulling off. This was also achieved with a complete absence of exhaust smoke, despite a considerable period of idling prior to the test ride. The bus performed very well on a short trip around Rainham which involved a great deal of low speed stop-start driving and some sections where it was possible to cruise for half a mile in top gear.

Power Torque are obviously eager to offer the Vineyard engine to other bus companies interested in converting similar vehicles. The company has extensive experience of gas fuelled engines with

some 3,500 units already in service, but has had little experience of the bus or coach industry to date. These engines comprise a mixture of either LPG or CNG units and are largely employed in industrial applications. Power Torque is based at Binley, on the east side of Coventry and has a long history of supplying power units for many applications.

Established in 1920 as a car dealership and an agricultural engineering enterprise, the business also branched into supplying static power units, components and engines for smaller automotive manufacturers such as Gilburn and Caterham. It began looking at gas fuelled engines in 1959 and Power Torque emerged as a separate division in 1960. Initially the main concentration was on propane conversions for fork lift trucks and some delivery vehicles. Later this developed to CNG fuel for stationary engines.

Power Torque's experience led them into development work with major manu-

facturers, including companies like Iveco Ifo and Perkins and eventually secured them a contract to do all the CNG conversions for the British Gas van fleet. They were introduced to the Vineyard engine by consultant engineer Robin Tilden-Davis, who had just returned from the United States after studying the latest technology available there. Vineyard was formerly the South Western Research Institute - somewhat similar to the Ricardo engineering and research facility in the UK. Vineyard not only produce engines for themselves but are involved in considerable development work for companies including Detroit Diesel, Ford and Volvo.

As a result of this, Robin will handle the marketing of the units and Power Torque will build the units, under licence, for supply to markets in the UK, Europe, Africa and the Near East. The company currently has a turnover of £6.5m and a staff of 45. They see potential increases in both figures with a likely demand for LPG conversions to vehicles operating in congested city centres.

Emissions from engines run on LPG are significantly less than from conventional diesels. A Vineyard unit is shortly to be sent for detailed emissions evaluation at an independent research facility and operated on a cycle equivalent to that required for Euro 2 diesels. The results will be compared with Euro 2 specifications but are expected to be well ahead of these. In the course of the demonstration no visible smoke and no odour was emitted from the exhaust.

Although buses are far less polluting than most other vehicles on the road today, the perception remains that smoke and smell are the inevitable accoutrements of public transport - particularly where elderly double deckers are concerned. LPG now appears to offer operators a sensible and viable alternative to conventional diesel and is worth serious consideration as an effective alternative.

By Martin Cole.

London Pride has installed a Vineyard BT10 LPG fuelled engine in this MCW Metroliner open top bus which is used on sightseeing tours of the capital.



Fleet Additions

Excels for East Yorkshire

East Yorkshire Motor Services has taken delivery of five 11.5 metre Optare Excel low floor buses which are scheduled to enter service in early January. The quintet take the company's spending on new buses in 1996 to £2.5 million. Since EYMS was privatised in 1987 the company has now invested £12 million on 130 new vehicles of various types, excluding those for the Manchester based Finglands subsidiary. In the same period a considerable number of secondhand vehicles, nearly all of them double deckers, have also been bought and the current fleet strength is 360, excluding Finglands and East Yorkshire Travel.

The new Excels will be allocated to Anlaby Road, Hull where 100 of the 120 vehicles EYMS runs in the city are based. They are to be used on the 66 and 181 routes serving Hull and Hessle which have a peak vehicle requirement of four vehicles. The fifth bus will be the spare vehicle for the routes and will also appear on other duties.

Painted in the latest burgundy and cream livery, the Excels carry the 'One step into the future' slogan first seen on Optare's demonstrator above the entrance door but will not otherwise be branded. In specifying the interior layout, maximum seating has been the aim, with the buses certified for either 43 seated and 24 standing passengers or 45 seated and 21 standees. A large luggage pen is located over the



The five new 11.5m Optare Excels line up outside East Yorkshire's Anlaby Road depot, to which they will be allocated.

front nearside wheelarch and opposite this on the outside there is a double forward facing seat and a two place longitudinal seat, the footstool for which protrudes some way into the gangway. In the area between the front wheelarches and the steps ahead of the rear axle the floor is flat and there are 12 pairs of forward facing seats providing accessible seating for the bulk of passengers. The vehicles are fully hard trimmed and have stanchions in red and moquette seat trim in Holdsworth Graffiti.

In common with other Excels the vehicles are powered by Cummins B series engines driving through Allison World Series B300R automatic gearboxes. They are fitted with a kneeling facility.

The Excels are the second batch of Optare vehicles delivered this year, eight Mercedes Benz 0405 based Prisma saloons having begun service on routes between Hull and Greatfield. There have also been 11 Plaxton group vehicles bought including three Pointer Dart SLFs for Park & Ride duties with the Scarborough & District operation in Scarborough and eight 77 seat Northern Counties

Palatine 1 bodied Volvo Olympians which were purchased from manufacturer stock in white and painted by Plaxton Parts & Service at Anston. Their delivery takes

to 54 the number of Palatine Olympians bought by the group. In a break with previous practice the latest Olympians have been allocated to four country area depots to improve service quality on inter-urban routes. In the past new buses have been allocated to Hull or specially branded inter urban services and cascaded at their mid life stage.

By Stuart Jones.



EYMS have eight 0405 Prismas.



Eight Northern Counties Palatine 1 bodied Volvo Olympians have recently been delivered and allocated to country area depots for use on inter-urban routes.



All five EYMS Excels are 45 seaters.

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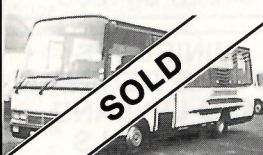
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390/7618/MB

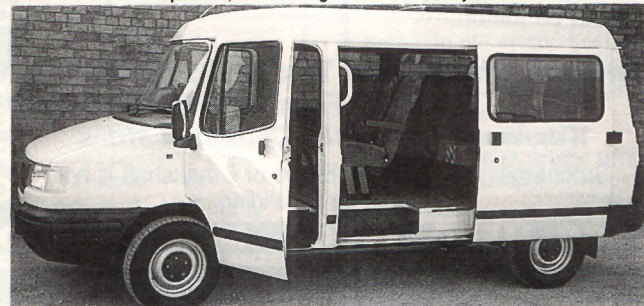
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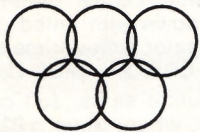
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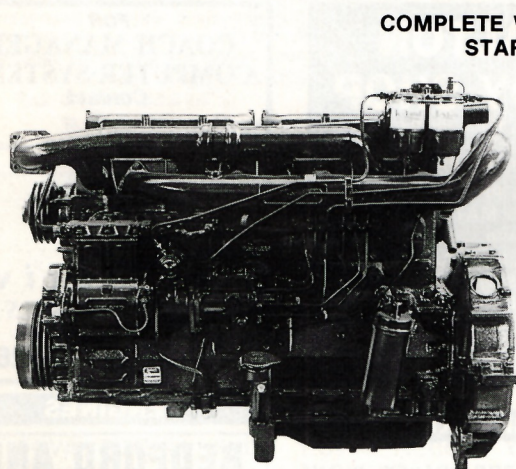
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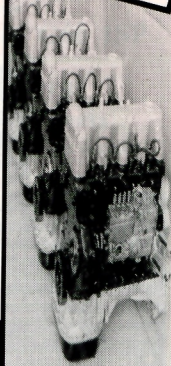
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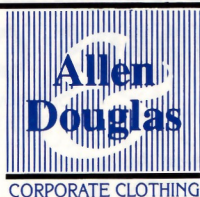
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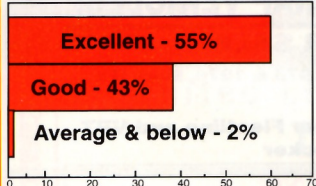
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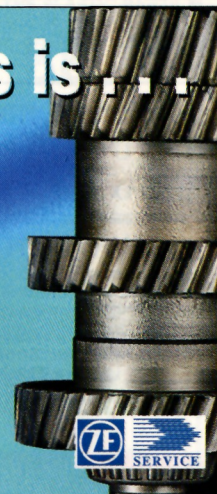
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Exterior White, Interior Blue and Black Mouquette (new seats), Radio Pa, Cassette, Front Wheel Discs, Driver Operated Door, ABS, Telma, Side Locker, Double Glazing, Provision for Webasto, Tinted Windows. Crew Seat, Peage Window and Padded Headrest Covers.

Ref: 7073



1993 L VOLKSWAGON OPTARE, 25+5 SEATS

Exterior White, Interior Grey Moquette, Driver Operated Door, Eberspacher, Tinted Windows and Black Gangway.

Ref: 6827

1988 E TOYOTA OPTIMO, 18 SEATS

Exterior Cream Green & Gold, Interior Red Striped Moquette, Radio, Driver Operated Door, Retarder, Tinted Windows, Curtains, Crew Seat and Soft Trim.

Ref: 6681

1993 K DENNIS JAVELIN PREMIER 320, 53 RECLINING SEATS

Exterior Red and Cream, Interior Brown Striped Moquette, Radio, Pa, Cassette, Wheel Discs, Driver Operated Door, Telma, Side Locker, Double Glazing, Tinted Windows, Curtains, Continental Door and Crew Seat.

Ref: 7028

1990 G DAF 230 MB CAETANO, 49/53 RECLINING SEATS

Exterior Red, White and Blue, Interior Brown Moquette, Radio, Pa, Cassette, Wheel Discs, Driver Operated Door, Exhaust Brake, Side Locker, Toilet, Double Glazing, Tinted Windows, Curtains, Continental Door, Crew Seat, Fridge and Drinks Machine.

Ref: 6979

1989 F VOLVO B10M PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3500, 51/53 RECLINING SEATS

Exterior White, Interior Grey, Red and Orange Moquette, Radio, Pa, Cassette, TV Box and Wiring for Video, Driver Operated Door, Side Locker, Toilet, Double Glazing, Tinted Windows, Curtains, Continental Door, Crew Seat and Crew Compartment.

Ref: 7027

1988 PRIVATE VOLVO B10M DUPLÉ 340, 49 RECLINING SEATS

Exterior White, Red and Green, Interior Multi Coloured Moquette, Radio, Pa, Cassette, Wiring for TV/Video, Wheel Discs, Driver Operated Door, Exhaust Brake, Side Locker, Toilet, Tinted Windows, Curtains, Continental Door, Crew Seat, Provision for Crew Compartment and Water Boiler.

Ref: 6391

1989 F VOLVO B10M VAN HOOL, 52 RECLINING SEATS

Exterior White, Interior Brown Striped Moquette, Radio, Pa, Stereo, Front Wheel Discs, Driver Operated Door, Exhaust Brake, Side Locker, Double Glazing, Tinted Windows, Curtains, Crew Seats and Soft Trim.

Ref: 6444

1990 G LEYLAND TIGER (CUMMINS 290) PARAMOUNT 3500, 49 RECLINING SEATS

Exterior White, Interior Grey Striped Moquette, Radio, Pa, Stereo, Driver Operated Door, Telma Side Locker, Toilet, Double Glazing, Tinted Windows, Webasto, Curtains, Continental Door, Crew Seats, Crew Compartment, Soft Trim, Aircraft Lockers and Wiring for TV/Video.

Ref: 6574



1988 PRIVATE SCANIA JONCKHEERE P99, 74 SEATS

Exterior Blue and Grey, Interior Grey Moquette, Radio, Pa, Cassette, 2 monitors Upstairs, 1 monitor downstairs, Video, Wheel Discs, Driver Operated Door, Telma, Boot Locker, Toilet, Double glazing, Webasto Tinted Windows, Crew Seat, Fridge and Sink.

Ref: 6964

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